



SUCCESS STORY

Glencoe Math + ALEKS®: A Formula for Success at Berwick Alternative School

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Name

Berwick Alternative K–8 School

Location

Columbus, Ohio

Enrollment

700 (K–8)



Overview

Berwick Alternative K–8 School is located on the east side of Columbus, Ohio, the 15th largest city in the U.S. The school serves over 700 elementary and secondary students, over 60% of whom qualify for the free or reduced lunch program.

Despite some economic challenges, Berwick Alternative School educators maintain high expectations for all students, and they are committed to giving every child the tools he or she needs to succeed. In fact, based on its 2014–2015 Ohio School Report Card, Ohio’s State Board of Education recognized Berwick Alternative K–8 as one of its first annual Momentum Award winners. The Momentum Award recognizes schools for exceeding expectations in student growth for the year.

Implementation: A new approach to 6–8 math

Two years ago, when it became clear that Berwick’s 6–8 math curricula did not align with the Common Core standards, school leaders began looking for a more effective alternative. Their choice was a combination of *Glencoe Math* with *ALEKS*®, a personalized, adaptive online math program.

Keith Emrick, a 6th-grade math teacher at Berwick Alternative School, was among the first to use *Glencoe Math* in his classroom. During the 2013–14 school year, he had access to the teacher edition and online resources, and he saw a 24% increase in student achievement. The next year, his principal bought the *Glencoe Math* student and teacher editions for the entire middle school, and Emrick was amazed by the results.

“Our previous curriculum didn’t meet state standards,” he says. “When *Glencoe Math* was implemented school-wide, we immediately saw huge gains. Suddenly, we were first in the district for 6th-grade assessments.”



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Keith Emrick
6th-Grade Math Teacher
Berwick Alternative School



In the 2015–16 school year, *ALEKS* was purchased for the whole district. Emrick and his peers began using *Glencoe Math* and *ALEKS* together on a regular basis in their 6–8th-grade classrooms, and they continued to see impressive gains.

Having a curriculum that was completely aligned with Ohio state standards was a big deal, and *Glencoe Math’s* write-in student textbooks were very popular. But it was the combination of *Glencoe Math* and *ALEKS* that truly changed the way math is taught at Berwick Alternative.

“At first, there was a learning curve to figure out where the kids could go with *ALEKS*,” recalls Emrick. “Since implementing *ALEKS*, we’ve had them work with it in the lab for 45 minutes, two times a week, and the students are more engaged and more involved with math than ever before.”

Student Engagement

Over the last few years, Emrick has created his own winning formula for using *Glencoe Math* and *ALEKS* together in the classroom every day.

“I usually put the *Glencoe Math* lesson on a projector and go through it with the kids,” says Emrick. “Then I have them work in their student textbooks. I stress that they need to follow everything we do in class with *ALEKS*. This year, their only homework is *ALEKS*.”

Once the students complete their homework on *ALEKS*, Emrick is then able to pull data to see how well they did. This allows him to monitor progress and adjust his lessons as needed. It is generally recommended that *ALEKS* be used a minimum of two hours per week in order to achieve significant learning outcomes. Emrick’s approach ensures at least that much time per week, if not more.

“I tell my students, ‘Anything you haven’t mastered, you should be doing on *ALEKS* when you are not in class,’” says Emrick. “They have eight topics a week to master, and they do it. I don’t have many students

emailing me with questions, because they are really engaged by the explanations in *ALEKS*. It gets them to practice.”



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Emrick notes that the best part is how *ALEKS* helps rebuild student confidence. Some of his students face challenges outside of school that can affect their learning, and because he has the tools to help them, he can still set high expectations.

“We don’t look at labels like ‘Basic,’” he says, “because kids don’t want to learn when you label them. We look at ‘You were here, and now you’re here.’ You may not be where you need to be yet, but you learned some things. You’re growing.”

Results

Thanks to the combination of *Glencoe Math* and *ALEKS*, secondary math students at Berwick Alternative School continue to grow and succeed.

In fact, Emrick loves to look at the data in *ALEKS* to see their progress, and he is getting accustomed to seeing success stories.

One such story is that of a student he had when he first started piloting *Glencoe Math* by himself. He recalls that her parents were upset because she was failing, and the previous curriculum had not met state standards. Fast-forward two years after the addition of *Glencoe Math* and *ALEKS*, and that same student is in 8th grade taking high school-level math classes.

“We’ve really seen our largest growth in math in the last year,” says Emrick. “It’s become a competition with students to show the topics they’ve mastered.”

He notes that several of his current 6th-grade students are already working on 7th-grade curriculum. There are also 7th graders working on 8th-grade curriculum, and 8th graders taking high school courses. Students are simply progressing faster, because *ALEKS* enables them to immediately see where they are and motivates them to practice harder.

The Future

Emrick and his peers continue to discover new ways to utilize *Glencoe Math* and *ALEKS* to track and support student progress.

“My advice to anyone using these programs is to play around with how you use them,” says Emrick. “I don’t use everything, but there is always something new to discover online.”

For the foreseeable future, Berwick Alternative School will continue to use a combination of *Glencoe Math* and *ALEKS*, because they are getting results. The *Glencoe Math* curriculum ensures that all state standards are met, while real-time data from *ALEKS* illustrates student growth and pinpoints the topics that students have mastered and where they still struggle.



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“The students love it because they feel confident in what they know, and the parents love it because they know we are on top of it,” says Emrick. “We never have to say, ‘we tried this, and we tried that, and it just isn’t working.’ We can see where students are, and we know exactly which skills are lacking and need to be addressed.”

About *Glencoe Math* and *ALEKS*[®]

Glencoe Math is a robust middle school math program designed to engage students and develop their ability to think critically. Interactive, highly customizable, and adaptable, *Glencoe Math* provides the tools necessary to expand understanding using purposeful technology. Incorporating the latest standards, *Glencoe Math* offers the perfect blend of print and digital. For more information, visit mheonline.com/glencoemath

ALEKS[®] is an adaptive, online math program that delivers a personalized learning path for each student. This robust, digital learning program adapts to each student’s level by delivering periodic assessments that determine what each student is most ready to learn. *ALEKS* challenges students while keeping them fully engaged, guiding students on their personalized learning path, while eliminating frustration and boredom. For complete details, visit aleks.com/k12

